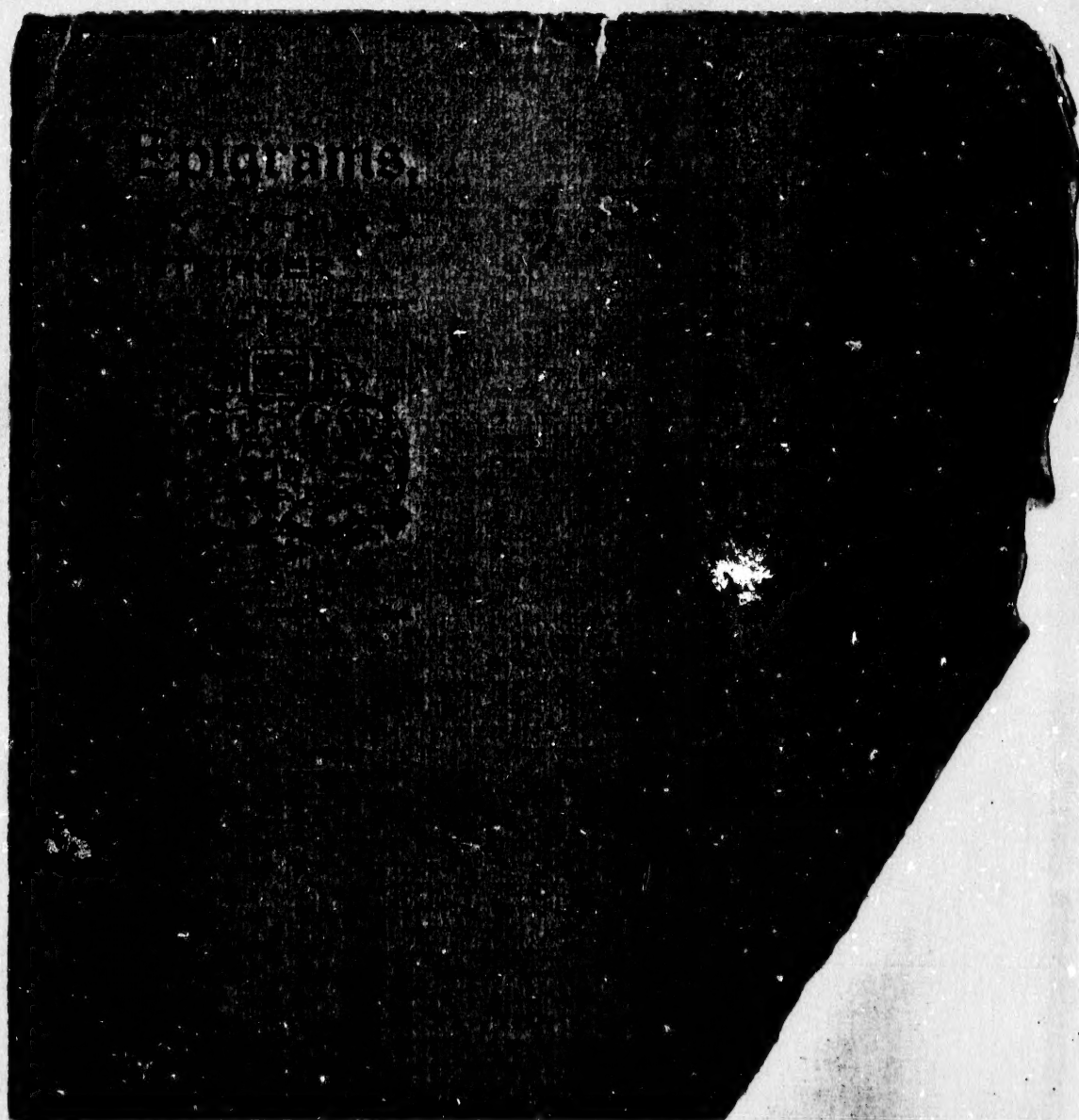




Epigrams.

BY ARTHUR J.
STRINGER . . .

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"Pauline; and Other Poems." . .*



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Can Stringer, Arthur J.

TO THE CRITIC.

Call him, whose art ye fondly blame or praise,
A cloven reed, whereon some Lip unknown,
God-like,—to lute ineloquent,—but plays
The one old ineffectual monotone.

WORSHIP.

Our dream-gods wane, and strange gods come ;
We bend, where gods may once have dwelt,
Our puzzled knee, and find them dumb.
Enough !—We know that we have knelt.

THE ANARCHIST.

From out her golden palace, Fortune thrust
A maddened dog, whose mouth foamed white with hate ;
And loud he howled, and gnawed the courtyard dust,
And ground his teeth upon the iron gate.

PHILOSOPHIES.

Some old-time glory haunts us evermore,
And in captivity behold us grown
Enamoured of our cell, in scrolling o'er
With signs and legends strange each mural stone.

PAUL VERLAINE.

Was this brown tawny-throated little bird
The being who flung such music down our vale?
Then not by this, but by the song we heard,
Let us remember now the nightingale.

THE SUICIDE.

'He bided not God's time!'—Yet God took note,
That rather rot in such a port, 'twas best
To face the open sea, and sink or float
Beneath the stars, and leave with Him the rest.

AFTER LONG SILENCE.

Since you who ever found our Home no Home,
Went homeward out across the harbour foam ;
Ah! how can I, so long of songs forlorn,
In aught but silence for your silence mourn ?

ON READING HERRICK'S HESPERIDES.

In their poor heavy-hearted gaiety,
They sing their little wine-songs o'er and o'er,
And half-beguile their hearts they cannot see
That Shadow lurking ever at the door.

REMORSE.

Red lips that dumbly quiver for his kiss,
And now but fondly touch his graveyard stone,—
Ah! lips he loved of old, remember this:
He had not died, if he had only known.

THEOLOGY.

The gods dwelt nearer men in olden days,
And through our world ethereal feet once trod ;
Since now they walk their more secluded ways,
Men struggle nearer each exalted god.

A TWILIGHT IN EARLY AUTUMN.

The low wind sounds a million drowsy lutes,
The yellowing sunlight on the hillside falls ;
Alone, aloud, a lingering robin flutes,
And from the elm one golden oriole calls.

CAPTIVITY.

Weep not for him, he hates his cage too well,—
Gnawing the very bars that bind him so.
Pity here one who grows to love his cell,
And when his freedom comes is loath to go.

A WOMAN AND A ROSE.

This rose, I thought, was at its rose-like best,
And you a girl at fault in many things ;
Yet one brief day you wore it in your breast,
And round it now a stranger beauty clings.

BESIDE THE MARTYRS' MEMORIAL.

(OXFORD.)

Their very gods, it seems, we have forgot ;
And drawing back the riven veil once more,
Too late we learn that theirs the happier lot
Who had their foolish gods to perish for.

THE UNCHANGING PINES.

What drowsy-hearted dryad murmured here
With whisperings,—it seems old Time asleep!
Till Spring remembers not the dreaming year,
And Autumn, heavy-eyed, forgets to reap?

ON RE-READING SWINBURNE'S LYRICS.

Those old-time Greeks, who sang to flute and lyre,
But schooled coy Melody to walk with Speech ;
'Tis only now she yields to his desire,
And they, grown lovers, mingle each with each.

MY FRIEND THE ENEMY.

Since thy fierce hate hath so befriended me,
Who shall, in sooth, oppose thee to the end,—
Call now no truce to break my strength, but be
Still in thine ancient enmity my friend.

WRECKAGE-WOOD.

We searched our rugged coast for wood to-day,
And, in our happy fire-light here, how meet
(Ah, poignant irony no tongue could say !)
You read your Byron, sitting at my feet.

A SAILOR WHO DIED AT SEA.

He knew no home except the changing deep,
Where he a vagrant homeling used to roam ;
We felt that one who wooed unrest, would sleep
The better should we leave him still at home.

THE TREE-SPARROW IN AUTUMN.

I hear blown down along the yellowing hills
One vernal strain that does the season wrong ;
The truer poet, thou, whose music fills
A bird-forsaken world in need of song.

BEFORE MARQUESTE'S 'WAKING GALATÆA.'

A doubtful boon is this, O waking breast!
One moment on life's threshold linger yet
And learn the curse in which you shall be blest,—
The great grim gift,—or sleep and still forget.

ART'S FUTILITIES.

In youth we have the soul but not the art ;
When patient age has learned all art's demands,
No youthful dream within the old-grown heart
Remains to busy our perfected hands.

ON A CERTAIN ASCETIC.

He gnawed a crust, and flung his goodly grain
Full wide across earth's leagues of hungry loam,
Believing he and his should meet again.
Ye wanting naught—*what harvest take ye home?*

THE JINGO.

He sat behind his roses, and he woke
With careless hands those strings that should have known
A subtler touch . to-day his country-folk
From old mad battlefields plough many a bone !

THE POET AND HIS HEART.

'What boon, should I betray my Rome to thee?'
And to the Roman girl the Sabine said:
'From each left arm its wealth,' and laughingly
They flung their fatal gold, and left her—*dead*.

THE OLD ELUSION.

He clutched the maid Delight, and held her fast ;
Her poppie breathing blind like a cloud.
And lo ! when down his tristful eyes he cast,
His cheated arms but held her empty shroud.

THE FINAL TEST.

You wrangle still if bard or rhymester he,
And poets all, you say you cannot tell!
He was what you by hate can never be,
And more than rhymester, *since he loved so well.*

I.

THE POET IN THE COUNTRY, AND LONELY.

But day by day to wander up and down,
And read the laughter and the tears of men,
As Shakespeare, say, once did in London town,—
And then what themes for my too idle pen!

II.

THE POET IN TOWN, AND ILL AT EASE.

But once among my pine-clad hills again,
To breathe God's air, and scent the distant sea ;
Who knows, I too might find that purer strain
Which marks the poet I can never be.

III.

THE POET, AND AT HOME.

He made us hate things loved once overmuch,—
Our seasons dark or glorious, as he chose.
He was our poet, and his subtle touch
Transformed our veriest weed into a rose.

THE SICK MAN.

He crawled too near the brink, and peered below,
For glassed in that grey face we saw chill fear,
And strange gaunt horrors, and abysmal woe ;
Then shrank he quaking from the grim gulf's leer.

A LADY NO LONGER YOUNG, AND TIME.

'Turn back, O Time, and bring my vanished youth
Once more to me!' And Time thereat replied :
'What years shall I return?'—'What years, forsooth !
How dar'st thou stand and ask me that?' she cried.

I.

THE PESSIMIST.

He pines upon a maple-spray,
The sad-eyed, silly fellow ;
And mourns of Autumn all the day,
Because one leaf is yellow.

II.

THE OPTIMIST.

Such vernal songs were never sung
By April-hearted bird before ;
Since here his little cage is hung
Once in the sunlight at the door.

THE SHADOWING GODS.

'I scorn your empty creeds, and bend my knee
To none of all the gods adored of men;—
I worship nothing, that I may be free.'
'Mayhap,' said one, 'you kneel to Freedom then.'

TO ONE IN SEARCH OF SONG.

Sweep not the skies for thine ethereal theme,
Lest near the sun thou singe the wings of song ;
But while lorn treaders of the stars but dream,
Beat down with rhythmic wings some earthly wrong.

THE DARK WOMAN OF 'THE SONNETS.'

Where he such honey garnered who can tell !
He left the perfume of the flower behind,
And vainly rifling every honeyed cell,—
The gods be thanked,—its name we never find.

ARS CELENDI ARTEM.

'On this great steamer's deck, how tranquilly we float,
Seafaring seems so easy now,—our thanks to coal;—
Come, join this merry-hearted crew who man the boat.'
Ah, dreamer, stand one moment in the stokers' hole!

THE CHURCHYARD EPITAPH.

Push back the tangled grass, and read the stone,—
His life's one sorrow breaking into rhyme,—
Where he, the singer of a day alone,
Had worn our iron crown his little time.

AT THE TEMPLE OF THE SUMMIT.

Knock, and the door shall open : we had knocked
And found the impitiable portals locked.
We learned us little croons to while along
Those dreary hours,—and ye, ye call it song !

